What is claimed is:

1. A method of communicating in a network having a plurality of communities each including a server, the method comprising:

receiving, from the server in a first community, a request indicating desired real-time, text-based messaging from a first terminal coupled to the first community server to a second terminal coupled to the server in a second community; and

processing the request, by the server in the second community, to establish the real-time, text-based messaging session between the first and second terminals through the first and second community servers.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising determining if the second terminal has an established link with the second community server.

3. The method of claim 2, further comprising sending a notification to the second terminal of the desired messaging session if the second terminal has an established link with the second community server.

4. The method of claim 3, receiving an indication from the second terminal of whether the desired messaging session has been accepted.

5. The method of claim 2, further comprising sending a message to a predetermined communications device other than the second terminal if the second terminal does not have an established connection with the second community server.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein sending the messages includes sending to a communications device including at least one of a telephone, a pager, and an electronic mail receiver.

7. The method of claim 2, further comprising performing a reverse log on to the second terminal if the second terminal does not have an established link with the second community server.

1   8.   The method of claim 1, further comprising establishing a chat session

2   between the first and second terminals.

1   9.   A method of communicating in a system having a server, comprising:

2   receiving, at the server, a request to contact a user;

3   accessing predetermined information to determine a plurality of

4   devices that may be employed for communicating with the user; and

5   sending a message to at least one of the plurality of devices.

1   10.   The method of claim 9, further comprising storing the predetermined

2   information listing a plurality of devices including a telephone and at least one other

3   device.

1   11.   The method of claim 10, wherein sending a message to the telephone

2   includes sending it to a public switched telephone network.

1   12.   The method of claim 10, further comprising converting a message into

2   voice data to send to the telephone.

1   13.   The method of claim 10, wherein the at least one other device is a non-

2   voice device.

1   14.   A system comprising:

2   a controller adapted to receive a request for establishing a messaging

3   session with a user;

4   a storage unit containing information identifying a plurality of devices

5   that may be used to contact the user; and

6   an interface unit adapted to send a message to at least one of the

7   devices.

1   15.   The system of claim 14, wherein the information identifies a voice

2   device and at least another device.

1   16.   The system of claim 15, wherein the voice device includes a telephone.

1   17.   The system of claim 15, wherein the at least one other device includes

2   a non-voice device.

1   18.   The system of claim 15, further comprising a data-to-voice converter

2   to convert data into voice.

1   19.   A server for use in a communications system having a plurality of

2   communities coupled by a network, each community associated with a different

3   service provider, the server being associated with a first one of the communities and

4   comprising:

5   an interface unit adapted to receive a contact request over the network

6   from an entity associated with another community, the entity not logged on to the

7   server, the contact request indicating a request to establish a text-based messaging

8   session with a destination terminal linked to the server; and

9   a controller adapted to send a notification to the destination terminal of

10   the contact request and to receive an indication from the destination terminal of

11   acceptance of the contact request.

1   20.   An article including one or more machine-readable storage media

2   containing instructions for establishing a text-based messaging session between

3   subscribers in a plurality of communities, each community associated with a different

4   service provider, the instructions when executed causing a system in a first

5   community associated with a first service provider to:

6   receive a request from a subscriber in a second community associated

7   with a second service provider, the request indicating a desired text-based messaging

8   session with a subscriber in the first community;

9   notify the subscriber in the first community of the request;

10   determine if the subscriber in the first community has accepted the

11   request; and

12   establish the text-based messaging session between the subscribers if

13   the subscriber in the first community accepted.

1   21.   The article of claim 20, wherein the one or more storage media contain

2   instructions that when executed cause the system to further send signaling to establish

3   the text-based messaging session.

1   22.   The article of claim 20, wherein the text-based messaging session

2   includes a chat session.

1   23.   The article of claim 20, wherein the one or more storage media contain

2   instructions that when executed cause the system to create a controller object adapted

3   to control the text-based messaging session.

1   24.   The article of claim 20, wherein the one or more storage media contain

2   instructions that when executed cause the system to:

3   receive a request from a subscriber in a third community associated

4   with a third service provider for a text-based messaging session; and

5   establish the text-based messaging session among the subscribers in

6   the first, second, and third communities.

1   25.   A data signal embodied in a carrier wave comprising one or more code

2   segments containing instructions for communicating in a network having a server, the

3   instructions when executed causing the server to:

4   receive a request to contact a user;

5   access predetermined information to determine a plurality of devices

6   that may be employed for communicating with the user; and

7   send a message to at least one of the plurality of devices.

1   26.   A communications system, comprising:

2   a plurality of service providers each providing a communications

3   network;

4   a plurality of terminals coupled to respective communications

5   networks provided by service providers; and

6   a control unit adapted to receive a messaging request from a terminal

7   coupled to a first communications network and to establish a real-time messaging

8   session with a second terminal coupled to a second communications network.